





An Iseult Idyll

AND OTHER POEMS

BOOKS OF POETRY

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AN ISEULT IDYLL
AND OTHER POEMS

BY

G. CONSTANT LOUNSBERY

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To E. H. L.

IN ADMIRATION AND AFFECTION

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I

AN ISEULT IDYLL

PART I

THROUGHOUT the ambiguous April day
The skylark wings his singing way,
And trills a rhapsody of May.

The wind that sweetens earth with spring
Falls on the ocean, wakening
The rising waves beneath his wing.

While swiftly from her native lea
A Cornish bark, rejoicingly,
Bears Iseult o'er the Irish sea.

AN ISEULT IDYLL

With eyes reverted toward the land
Dimly she sees the paling strand
Diminish to a silvery band.

But, as a carrier pigeon springs
Homeward on strong, exulting wings,
The alien ship glides on, and flings

The waters green to gleaming spray,
Threading its pathless southward way,
While shine and shower cross the day.

And where the ripples bud and break
The sea mews drift along its wake,
Like boats the tide at will may take.

Then landward o'er the glistening main
Fair Iseult flings her song. In vain !
The wind beats back the sad refrain, —

SONG

FAREWELL, farewell, a long farewell to thee,
O happy isle, blue girdled of the sea !
Fair are thy fields of green that fade to grey,
And dim mine eyes, with watching wistfully
The lengthening of the endless watery way.
Farewell, farewell, a long farewell to thee.

Farewell, farewell, a long farewell to thee !
Thine is my love, and thine the heart of me,
Through all the widening of the alien years
My hopes be thine, and thine the memory
That brightens through the bitterness of tears.
Farewell, farewell, a long farewell to thee !

SONG

Farewell, farewell, a long farewell to thee !
Thou art the world, what other world could be !
Lo ! I had hoped, when life was o'er, to die
Upon thy breast, and smiling peacefully
To whisper, ere words falter to a sigh,
Farewell, farewell, a long farewell to thee !

PART II

As clouds obscure the April skies,
The overwhelming tears arise,
And tremble in her baffled eyes.

The gleeful breezes pluck and woo
Her kirtle, where the crocus' hue
Flames up a robe of violet blue.

Hers is a face whose beauty seen
Makes one forget what life has been,
And own her, henceforth, utter queen.

AN ISEULT IDYLL

Thus Tristram, dreaming, lingers there
Unknown, perplexed of her despair,
And timid, seeing grief so fair.

“ I would not anger thee, by Heaven,
Yet let my presence be forgiven
For all the joy that thine has given !

“ Sorrow, methinks, has wearied thee,
And weariness comes over me
From battling with the wind and sea.

“ Behold a goblet rich with gold,
And mellow wine, matured of old,
A luscious draught of heat and cold !

“ Nay, cheer thy heart, and pledge me then,
As in those hours of anguish, when
Wounded I lay among thy men.”

AN ISEULT IDYLL

So pleads he, till she smiles again,
And, drinking, feels through every vein
A joy that trembles into pain.

He raises high the bowl with half
The dancing poison, sweet to quaff,
And drains its sweetness with a laugh.

And, in a trenchant stroke of light,
Love cleaves the darkness of their night,
And puts the fading world to flight.

As one who knows not Life from Death,
Nor yet what power Love's language hath,
He calls with half-abated breath, —

Iseult ! One wild, unmated word,
Iseult ! No sound so sweet is heard
In all the lyric speech of bird.

AN ISEULT IDYLL

But, softer than a startled sigh,
Her voice reluctant, breathes reply,
Tristram ! — a tender, summoning cry.

And all is silent save alone
The sea's reverberate monotone,
With Love's own voice in unison.

A T T H I S

(Ἡράμαν μὲν ἐγὼ σέθεν, Ἀτθοί, πάλαι πότα.)

I LOVED thee, Atthis, long ago,

Loved thee, nay, breathe it soft and low

For all its shattered sweetness, so —

I loved thee, Atthis, long ago !

Once, more than life thy slightest curl

I loved to touch, to call mine. — Girl —

Thou wonder wrought in rose and pearl —

How Time has changed us in his whirl !

Yea, then thy hands about my brow

Were more than all these laurels ; how

They thrilled me uttering every vow !

I cannot quite forget — canst thou ?

ATTHIS

I loved thee ; scarcely could I say
“ I love thee ” in that bygone day ;
Too sweet a thing it seemed to play
The changes on. Said I always ?

Ah ! Wild regrets o’er ruins ! Sweet,
Too wayward are Love’s stealthy feet ;
How all my rhythmic pulses beat
The sad refrain relax, repeat, —

I loved thee, Atthis, long ago,
Loved thee, nay, breathe it soft and low,
For all its shattered sweetness, so —
I loved thee, Atthis, long ago.

THE FALSE SPRING

THIS is the joyous birthday of the spring !
So thought I when the morning kissed thy
face,
And as deep flowers unfold from sleep their
grace,
Thine eyes awoke and found mine worshipping.
Night comes without thee. Lo, the piteous
thing !
My hopes put forth their tender leaves apace,
When all the blighting winds gave sudden chase,
And nipped their premature adventuring.

THE FALSE SPRING

Since all my spring is winter once again,
I turn within to warm me ; where the fire —
Before thine image in a secret shrine
Effulgent — with an unremitting pain
Consumes my heart, and feeds my vain desire,
Till Spring herself shall grant an anodyne.

THE SIRENS

PRELUDE

WHILE there was day a favouring wind, vouch-
safed

By Circe of the braided tresses, sped
Our dark-prowed ship that fled as flees a bird ;
Now hovering o'er the wave with pinions spread,
Now straining to the breeze, now dipping down
Its crest to quaff a beaker of the brine —
So fared we toward the sunset and the night.
Within the twilight, half divined, half seen,
Dim in the distance floating like a flower,
I saw a purple speck upon the sea.

THE SIRENS

Immediately the wind ceased and the sail
Flapped idly like a wounded creature's wing,
While all the waves fell forthwith upon sleep.
A moment silent sate we marvelling,
When at a word my comrades, rising, furl'd
The helpless sails and stowed them in the hold.
Then each man grasped his oar of polished pine,
With one accord they smote the drowsy main,
And tossed the gleaming water till our wake
Was dappled with the sea foam, while a path
Golden with sunlight lured us toward the shore.
Then I, remembering Circe's boding words,
Addressed my company and speaking said, —
“It is not well, O friends, that I alone
Should know the oracles the goddess told, —
That dreadful goddess, she of human voice.
Therefore give ear and learn, and knowing die.

THE SIRENS

Or happily we may shun the Fates and death !
First did she warn me of the Sirens twain
Whose dwelling is a field, where diverse flowers
Speckle the grass as spots a leopard's skin.
Strange faces have they, delicate as pearls
Flushed with the fallen daylight, when the sun
Mirrors his radiance in the roseate main.
Like hardened drops of water are their eyes,
Or like strange gems that glint with borrowed
light.

Yea, eyes that veil the malice of the mind,
Changeful and treacherous as the inconstant sea.
These twain, like anglers seated on the cliff,
Cast forth their nets of song upon the deep.
Or, hiding from their prey as hunters hide,
They wing destruction with the shaft of song !
And he who hears that perfect, poisonous voice,

THE SIRENS

The melting magic of that melody,
Shudders for very sweetness, nor endures ;
But, as a fascinated bird will fly
Straight to the serpent's throat and sudden doom,
So fares he, heeding not the glittering eyes
Until the fragrance of the blinding hair
Has stifled him, while venom'd kisses draw
His soul in little drops from out his lips,
And drink his life as roses sip the dew !
'T is told that all along the tawny sand,
Unmourned, unburied, men's rejected bones
Lie thick as shells rejected of the sea.
Fain would I hear what subtle strain of song
Has slain more heroes than a Trojan spear !
Therefore, with Circe's help, I have devised
A guile whereby I may elude the snare.
Do ye, O comrades, lash me to the mast,

THE SIRENS

Anointing first your ears with deafening wax.
But when, like some proud captive whom the
cords

First fetter, I shall battle to break free,
And writhe against the fast-restraining ropes,
Do ye with bonds constrain me all the more.”
I ceased, and they consenting fast obeyed
My guileful words, and plied the speeding oar.
And now the distance lessening I saw
An island, like a gem of sunlit green,
Throbbing upon the bosom of the sea ;
While all the shore curved in a golden rim
About the wine-dark water 'neath my gaze.
Then thought I yearning on my own glad isle,
The rocky Ithaca, and her whose voice
Made morning joyful and rejoiced the night,
A blessing, not a bane, to mortal men.

THE SIRENS

A faint and distant sound beguiled mine ear ;
As when within a wood the huntsman hears
The inarticulate murmur of a stream,
But knows not whence its liquid voice may flow,
So I, naught seeing, strained my eager eyes,
When full upon my startled senses fell,
In floods of music, all the Siren Song.

THE SIREN'S SONG

OH, tarry ye a while,
For welcome, in this isle

That harbours its delights for thine and thee,
While listening ye rejoice
To hear the Siren's voice,
The Siren's song of love and mystery.

We twain are wondrous fair,
And deep within our hair
The nestling shadows flee from garish day ;
The sunset in our eyes
Lingers, when from the skies
The splendour of the sunlight fades away.

THE SIREN'S SONG

The pale narcissi stand
Like nymphs on either hand,
And marvel at their whiteness in the brook ;
For all their rivalry
No flower that flecks the lea,
Can vie with us in field or dell or nook.

No winter here devours
The summer's fruits or flowers ;
The fettered winds go whispering to and fro ;
No heedless foot forgets
And slays the violets,
That hide them where the reeds and grasses
blow.

Here Love's sweet self unarmed
Feels all his fierce ways charmed ;
His influence falls, like showers of vernal rain,

THE SIREN'S SONG

On tired flowers freshening,

Or birds awakening,

While pleasure knows no aftermath of pain.

Come, idle where the stream,

With many a glint and gleam,

Floats all its silver ripples to the sea ;

Or, where the dappled shade

Half hides the darkening glade,

Pursue the dancing shadows stealthily.

Like some shy-footed fawn,

Surprise the startled morn ;

And dive within the river where it slips,

And deepens, and grows still,

Forgetting how each rill

Upon the mountain sang with boistrous lips.

THE SIREN'S SONG

Lo ! far within the wood,
Where dwells the Satyr brood,
Are springs of milk and honey, while, men say
Half hidden, through the green,
Half guessed at, and half seen,
The mænad and the bassarid do play —

Garlands they gather there
To weave about thine hair,
And, lo, thy couch they smother o'er with flowers.
They laugh and live as one
Who hides him from the sun,
Through all the verdant length of vernal hours.

And when the nightingale,
Within the distant dale,
Maddens the midnight with her song of songs,

THE SIREN'S SONG

That wanderer, the moon,
With listening feigns a swoon,
And far unto the dawn her stay prolongs.

What profits it to plough
The barren sea? Each bough
Hangs heavy with its fruit, its shade, for thee;
While we the Sirens haunt
Thy heart with fairest chaunt
And life is one mellifluous harmony.

Since each deciduous rose,
And soft ephemeral snows,
And loves more fragile and more fair than these,
With stern fatality
Mock man's mortality,
Give o'er thy soul to songs that soothe and ease.

THE SIREN'S SONG

Then tarry ye a while,
Fair wanderer, in this isle
That harbours its delights for thine and thee.
Yea, tarry, and rejoice
To hear the Siren's voice,
Oh, stay thy ship, fair wanderers ; tarry ye.

THE NEW EDEN

NAY, grieve not, heart of mine, but say,
Ah, God, 't was sweet to love a day !
To love a little and forget —
Who would not, though all time regret ?
(Give over, for it may not be.)

I lured Love with my songs, and you
With all your beauty bent thereto ;
The tree of Love waxed great and fair,
And, lo, within its leaflike hair
(God, it was goodly fair to see !)

THE NEW EDEN

Strange fragrant blossoms blood-red burst,
And tempted us with sudden thirst —
Alas, the bitter fruit they bore,
With honeyed rind and wormwood core !
(Give over, for it may not be.)

And I who tasted, shall I cry,
“ You tempted me, my Eve, and I —
And I have eaten, and am sad,
Yet for a little were we glad ”
(God, it was goodly fair to see !)

Though I still sing my songs, and you
With all your beauty bend thereto,
Who shall change winter back to May ?
And we too wend the selfsame way.
(God, it was goodly fair to see.)

THE NEW EDEN

Give thanks to Love for what has been,
And cry again with voice serene,
“Nay, grieve not, heart of mine, but say,
Ah, God, ’t was sweet to love a day !”
(Give over, for it may not be.)

A REVERIE

I SAW within the roseate drooping twilight
An island cradled on the waters blue ;
A purple cloud, shot through with flame of day-
light,

Soft canopied the isle with wondrous hue.

Then each desire of mine became a flower
Upon its vernal banks ; methought to cull
Those fragrant petals would assuage the power
Of secret sorrows, while their scent would lull.

But ever as my ship strove yearning shoreward,
The island fled and faded in the night.

With anxious eye I gazed and leaning forward,
“ Ah, who shall steer me to my heart’s delight ? ”

A REVERIE

I cried. Among the purple sails soft stirring
The wind made answer as with human breath :
“ This is the haven of Happiness we ’re nearing.
But lo ! the steersman at the helm is Death.”

ODE TO BACCHUS

It is the month of Bacchus, when the Sun
Has grown weary of the gilded smile
That summer lent him; now he seems like one
Who, half through tears no sweetness can
 beguile,
Beams 'neath tired brows whereon a brooding
 cloud
Obliterates the hope of bygone days :
Dead days to be, when Spring's regenerate touch
Shall rouse the world to fling her winter shroud,
And fill the fields with flowers, and the ways
Of heaven and earth with gladness overmuch.

ODE TO BACCHUS

Come, ye, with soft, shy tread, ye Hyads, come,
Your rose-tipped fingers fashioning a wreath,
And let your wine-flushed lips no more be dumb,
And weave the dance along the dew-decked
heath !

But you, sweet Pan, lead on the satyr brood
Forth from cool caverns and from forest dells ;
Awake the piping of the rustic reed,
That through the heights, along the leafless wood,
The melody may hover till it swells
The universal pæan of the mead.

Crown him with ivy, with the luscious leaves
Of changeless green, and see within his hair
The nestling tendrils of the vine that breathes
Autumnal fragrance to the perfumed air.
Slay ye a kid, a milk-white kid that bleats

ODE TO BACCHUS

Unblemished. Shed his blood upon the vine ;
About its roots, grown thirsty, see ye pour
Libation to the dead whom summer's heats
Have smitten ; and forget not Proserpine,
Who dwells in Hades till these days be o'er.

Born and reborn, now sorrowful, now glad,
Through change eternal rising from the sea,
His are the tides that pulse, now slow, now
mad,

Within the blood of man and beast and tree ;
His is the grape, a globe of fire and dew,
Dusky as night, like day shot through with fire,
An amber bead of sunshine and of rain ;
To solace woe, for those who rightly sue,
And drown despair or kindle dead desire.
On to the mountains, hail him from the main !

ODE TO BACCHUS

Ye maids of Thebes, ye mothers, hurry hence,
For madness mingles with the midnight air.
The liberator Bacchus! whither, whence?
Then follow, follow, track him to his lair.
Unbind your tresses, let your fillets fall,
And seize ye each a thyrsus sharp and sweet,
Forget not then to draw the dappled fawn
About your foam-white shoulders as ye call,
Εὐοί, Bacchus! hurry we to greet
The God before the sky is strewn with dawn.

Away, away, the night is now nigh spent!
Lo, through the forest see each flitting light,
As if the stars unto the trees had bent,
In pity of their cold and wintry plight.
What madness is abroad? — yet, stay, what cry
Of man or beast that stabs the hour of sleep,

ODE TO BACCHUS

As lightning stabs the darkness ? Nay, then hear
The waves upon the shore, the breezes sigh,
Εὐοί, *Bacchus* ! while from vale and steep
A thousand echoes toss it to the ear.

II

LOVE AND LEARNING

How oft before the poet and the sage,
Before these mortals grown as gods to men,
Have I paused reverencing the immortal page,
Athirst and hungry, e'en as Israel when
They grew aweary with the wilderness.
Lo! Here is new shed manna for the mind.
Here wisdom's font shall slake the soul's distress,
And here the cloud of flame shall lead the blind!

What were these gifts of greatness unto me
But priceless pearls, before me idly flung,

LOVE AND LEARNING

Till thou didst first reveal the mystery

Concealed in sacred, but in secret tongue ?

Thus, seeking learning, have I learned Love's

lore

And Wisdom through Love regnant evermore.

REMEMBER

(Après De Musset)

REMEMBER ; when the timid dawn
Unbars her charmed palace to the sun,
Remember, when the plaintive night forlorn
Dreaming beneath her silver veil steals on,
The thought of pleasure that thy panting breast
delights,
The sweet, soft dreams that Evening's shade
invites,
While in the woods below
A voice is murmuring low, —
Remember !

REMEMBER

Remember ; when the hand of Fate
Shall part us and forever separate,
When sorrow, banishment, and length of
 years,
Shall wilt the heart with desolating tears.
Dream of my passion sweet, dream of my last
 farewell,
No time shall conquer love, no absence quell ;
 For each heart-beat shall say
 To-morrow, as to-day,
 Remember !

Remember ; when beneath Earth's cold
My broken body shall forever sleep ;
Remember, when the flower over-bold
From out my mouldering grave shall gently
 creep :

REMEMBER

Unknown and undivined my deathless soul shall
stray

Beside thee ever in that latter day,
While through the night a groan,
Shall voice the monotone
Remember !

THE BETTER PART

LIFE is a perilous and piteous thing ;
I know not if Death's ways be strewn with
 sleep
Or with a light relentless, keen to bring
Before our waking souls the sins we weep.

Yet though the whole world weep for very
 shame
Upon the sin that holds mine eyelids dry,
I call for witness on Christ's spotless name
That no man is more innocent than I.

THE BETTER PART

They took me from her, not a farewell word
For all my hours of longing and of love !
She lay as listless as a wounded bird,
Yet in her whiteness shamed the milk-white
dove.

Dead, dead before me ! — strange it is that Life
Should yield to Death her fairest ornament.
Do the dead smile ? Nay, see what sign of
strife.

If she be slain, what wound is here, what rent ?

Small wonder she whom Heaven made so
fair

Turned false to me and wearied of the love,
The maddening adoration and the care,
The worship, that she stole from God above.

THE BETTER PART

Nay, marvel rather that a little time,
A little space of joy she found for me,
Before she scorned me, like a bitter rhyme,
And made my name a thing of mockery.

Then was I like a man some fragrant dream
And delicate has long deluded ; yea,
I could not quite believe that which did seem
To challenge all my sight by night, by day.

Fair had she been when mine, but fairer now,
Her alien beauty maddened all my breast
And angered me, until I made a vow —
God help me, father, know you not the rest ?

How all her sweetness stung me, now not mine !
I saw the burnished hair that framed her face
Tangle the sunlight, sweetly did it shine
Caught up or loosened with elusive grace ;

THE BETTER PART

Loosened or looped to please another's eye —
Those meshes that had snared my guileless
heart ;

I heard the little laugh, the soft reply
Wherein that other man had lot and part.

It was not well that they should flaunt their
sin

Before my famished eyes, and laugh their love
While, like an outcast from the feast within,
For but a smile I hungered and I strove.

Sorrow so wrought with me that I was grown
A shadow of a man ; at every pore
I felt the prick of pain, yea, flesh and bone
With sudden weakness sickened more and
more.

THE BETTER PART

Sleep fled mine eyes and through the hovering
night

I watched and worshipped all her loveliness ;
The eyelids flowerlike folded from the light,
The lurking gold of each abandoned tress ;

The purple veins whose vinelike tracery,
Crept all along the ivory of her arm ;
The blood that shook her throat, the witchery
That held mine eyes beneath her sleepless charm.

And many a night I wearied, seeing how
The moonlight wooed the sunlight of her hair,
While through the open casement soft and
low
The nightingale's mad song flamed through the
air.

THE BETTER PART

'T was yester-e'en ; more faithful than a priest
I watched the passing of each gradual hour,
Mine eyes inviting all my soul to feast,
Helpless, her fragile beauty held my power.

She slept, at times I saw a furtive smile
Creep like a sunbeam o'er her flower-soft mouth ;
She dreamed, and dreaming, with unconscious
 guile,
Her lips found mine so long given o'er to
 drouth.

God, how I loved her ! Till a recreant tear
Fell on her face and woke her. Suddenly
A name, his name, she sighed, then seized with
 fear,
“ Ah, you ! ” she laughed and laughed right
 bitterly —

THE BETTER PART

I saw not, for the night grew very black,
I grappled with a foe, my giddy brain
Seemed spinning down to Hell, or reeling back
To unseen torture and to hideous pain.

A soft thing fluttered like a frightened bird
Between my fingers, fluttered and was still.
The blood within her throat no longer stirred.
I looked, I kissed her ; she had laughed her fill.

Her wide eyes watched me, but she did not say
One little word for all the pious care
Wherewith I tended her until the day
Stole in and found me braiding up her hair.

They say I killed her, sent her guilty soul
Wailing down all the fiery gulfs of Hell ;
They tell me, when the matin bell shall toll,
That I must die, and though I know it well,

THE BETTER PART

One pang the more shall make an end of pain.
Yet you know, father, I am innocent —
But tell it not, to die I am so fain ;
Then pray for me that Death be quickly sent.

Though like twin flames that bend before the
wind

Now whirled together, and now blown apart,
We burn forever ; let her lover find
What joy life has. Mine is the better part.

ONE HAPPY HOUR

ONE happy hour from out his honeyed store
Reluctant Love has granted me; once more
I see the fragile beauty of her face
Draw swiftly toward me, as with elfin grace
She stoops to raise the heart that would adore.
Shall all things be as in the days before
My happiness lay shattered to the core?
Think you that Hate would yield to Love his
place

One happy hour?

ONE HAPPY HOUR

Hers are the eyes whose pity I implore !

Ah ! Let me dream them — as I dreamed of
yore —

More true, more blue than heaven's sapphire
space,

That, when joy flees before stern Sorrow's pace,
Sweet Memory may yield me o'er and o'er
One happy hour !

PARTING

SEE, love, your eyes in my eyes,
This hour with *its* sweets, how it flies.

Ah, would some soft-winged word
Might nest in your heart like a bird !

O love, your hands in my hands,
Who conquers love who understands, —

The sudden shaft of the light
That sunders the heart of the night ;

The silver gleam of a stream —
'Twixt shadowy banks of a dream —

PARTING

In anxious flight to the sea,
And then is it well, will it be?

Ah, love, your mouth to my mouth,
One kiss for a lifetime of drouth!

SAPPHIC ODE TO APHRODITE

APHRODITE, subtle of mind, immortal,
Child of Zeus, and Weaver of wiles, I pray
thee

Do not thou, with pains and distress subduing,
Gracious one, tame me.

But come hither, if thou didst ever, praying,
Heed of old my voice though afar, and heeding
Left thy father's dwelling, a golden mansion,
Yea, and thou camest,

SAPPHIC ODE TO APHRODITE

Having yoked thy chariot, while there drew thee
Sparrows fair and fleet round the dark earth
flapping —

Swiftly flapping — wings from the heaven down-
ward

Through the mid-ether.

Onward, earthward came they, and fast arriving
Thy immortal countenance smiling asked me —
Blessed one — What evil is come upon me,
Why do I call thee ?

What thing I desire, even more than all things
Raging in my heart, and — “ Who now persuading
Wouldst thou lead to love thee ” (to love me),
saying, —

“ Sappho, who wrongs thee ? ”

SAPPHIC ODE TO APHRODITE

“Even though she flees she shall swiftly follow ;
She who would not take of thy gifts shall give
 them ;

She who would not love thee shall quickly love
 thee —

Yea, though she would not.”

Come to me, and coming I pray release me,
Loose my care grown grievous, and even all
 things,

Whatsoe'er my heart doth desire, accomplish ;
 Be thou mine ally.

SAPPHICS

DARKNESS AND DAYLIGHT

FAR beyond the fields where the sea lies sleeping
Hovers Daylight, flushed with regret and feeling,
All the Gold of Hope on her drowsy forehead
Silently darkening.

Through the languid night that the wild winds
lull not,
Dyed about with purple and dark with weeping,
Send me, Sweet, a dream on the wings of Hope
borne.
Down to me sleeping.

SAPPHICS

Let its feet be shod with a sudden longing,
Let its breath be warm with the joy of spring-
time,
Let its hands be dipped in the dew of Lethe,
Soothing and subtle.

Then my heart shall sing with a joy new risen,
All my night shall yearn to the light of day-time,
One brief hour obliterate all the weary
Waiting without thee.

RONDEL

SLEEP is a thornless rose upon Life's breast,
Whose opalescent petals breathe forth rest ;
More mellow than the moon's melodious light,
Subtle of fragrance, fraught with strange delight
Of fragile dreams and delicate repose,
Sleep is a thornless rose !

Love is a blood-red rose of poignant thorn
Whereby the flower-soft heart is bled and torn,
While all the crimson leaves burn brighter, gain
New lustre from the crimson drops of pain.
How brief its beauty ; yet, while still it glows,
Love is a blood-red rose.

AMECHANIA

Too many things we seek, we fling our youth
Like hoarded gold at length inherited,
And when the last unreckoned coin has sped,
Our empty laughter rings the pregnant truth !
Then shamed to effort, with a toil uncouth
We heap us riches of the dust ; we tread
Our hopes to ashes, and our hearts are fed
On bitter husks that parch the burning mouth.
Such wealth is ours as beggars us. Ah ! when
There comes the flash of vision to our eyes
We see the distant hills, and we despise
This walking in the valley with mean men ;
And naked of our cares, as runners run,
We hasten upward toward the failing sun.

FROM LA SAMARITANE

I

Photine sings :

1. O MY beloved, through the day I sought
in vain

And found thee not ; night gives me back
my own again.

The growing darkness lends us still some
little light,

And in thy sight,
Mine eyes delight.

2. Softer thy name than all the precious oils
that flow ;

Sweeter thy breath to me than all the
flowers that blow ;

FROM LA SAMARITANE

Thy words are drops of honey, and thy
sweet, light eyes,
Turned mirror-wise,
Hold all the skies.

3. Ah ! Like a rose, a tender rose that boasts
no thorn

My heart leans towards thee, seeking thee
from morn till morn !

As gently as a perfume on my heart, come
rest —

A strong seal pressed
Against my breast !

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II

S O N G

WHEN we would play
Some dancing air,
All glad and gay,
Ye did not care.

And when the strain
Was soft and sad,
We piped in vain,
No tears ye had.

FAREWELL

FAREWELL ; the half-averted face of day
Retreats behind the portals of the night,
Yet clear before us lies the sundered way —
My path of darkness, and thy trail of light.
Ah, love, no longer mine, for all our tears
This ruthless day unmakes the might of years !

I loved thee over well,
And yet farewell !

Farewell ; 't were easier to give to death
Thy loveliness. Love, though thou set him
free,
Within my heart beats like a prisoned bee.

FAREWELL

Where dwelt my honeyed hours of happiness
Are faded ghosts that mock at my distress.

 Their bloodless voices tell

 A faint farewell.

Farewell; when 'neath a robe of pitying clay,
My heart shall slumber in indifferent rest,
Assuaged of sorrow, nor by mirth oppressed,
Dead as my happiness lies slain to-day,
Perchance this moan shall wake thy memory, —
My life, my all I lost, once losing thee,
 Long e'er the tolling bell
 Could knell, Farewell!

LOVE'S SILENCE

I

WE drifted on the tranquil twilight sea,
A mirror to the radiance of the sky,
Wherein we watched the flaming clouds float by,
Tracing the waves with painted imagery.
Hushed was her song; on, on mysteriously,
In silence unperplexed of sound or sigh,
We glided, with our idle oars held high
Lest they should drip their drowsy melody.

For all a world of men we two alone!
While LOVE remembered, bid our love surmise

LOVE'S SILENCE

A world of love, that grew before our eyes

Unlimited in scope and horizon.

So dreamed we what should be, from what had
been,

With married thoughts no word could get
between.

Y

LIFE IN DEATH

II

THROUGH all the dark and hollow hours of
night,
Pain held aloof the baffled touch of sleep ;
With dreamless eyes I lay, too sad to weep,
When, lo, a vision ! Brighter and more bright,
Clothed all about with strange, uncertain light,
The lords of Life and Death methought did
keep
Expectant vigil through the silence deep ;
And as I marvelled, lo, a piteous sight !

LIFE IN DEATH

Mine was Life's countenance, and mine Death's
face

That swiftly neared me, as a shadow steals
With flowing steps and soft, repulsive grace.

I lay as one who suffers not nor feels ;

Yet ere Death's closing kiss could seal him mine

Thy lips, Beloved, brought Love's anodyne.

DEATH IN LIFE

III

LET no man henceforth cast his dart at
Death,

Nor hastily conceive of him a foe,
Since he alone relief unending hath
From Life's eternal tyranny of woe.

Upon a midnight, often would I weep
The blind inexpiable cruelty
Wherewith Death snares, in sudden nets of
sleep,

The loved one, bids the lover wander free !

DEATH IN LIFE.

Ah, vacant fear ! Though my belovèd lives,
No longer love doth love anticipate ;
To mine unanswered prayers grown deaf, she
gives
A blind indifference more keen than hate.
A grief beyond my grief what man can prove,
Since Life, not Death, hath robbed me of my
love ?

REQUIESCAT

R. G. I.

PART I

GRIEF hath no utterance in human speech
To half reveal its pangs or clothe its pain,
But sits apart wide-eyed and dumb, for vain
It were to plead for those beyond Life's reach.

'T is sweet to think Earth gathers to her breast
The stricken hyacinth, and that dear head
Fallen flowerwise, say we of our cherished dead,
And feels our loss is hers, though they have rest.

REQUIESCAT

Rest, roseate rest, for all those fallen on sleep,
When, as a rain-drop seeks the gathering sea,
They slip within a still eternity,
While we an unrequited vigil keep —

Yea, watch and weep, but see not with our
eyes

Aught save the vacant hours and ashen face
Of Life, and cry on Death to give us place
Among his host, since dead Life's sweetness
lies.

Yea, weep and watch, and with our lambent
tears

Tell orisons, still hugging our despair,
Since all Life holds for us of sweet or fair
Fades with the fading melancholy years.

REQUIESCAT

Floats like a leaf adown some sullen stream,
A leaf Death's wind has blasted with his
breath, —

Drifts whither — to what hidden home of
Death ?

And vanishes like a deciduous dream.

A dream ! so cry we. Vain was our delight,
And like to moving mists at break of day
It lifts, yet leaves no light, dissolves away
And scatters us like phantoms of the night !

How shall we pierce the ears now deaf with
dust,

Unseal the sleep that moulders in his eyes,
Unlock his lips with eloquence of sighs ?
Shall Love avail us, Love in whom we trust ?

REQUIESCAT

Ah, Love, sweet Love ! so bitter when the
sweet

Is but remembered, while no hour forgets
The salient sorrow and the sharp regrets,
Yet all thy trodden paths forget his feet !

Ah Life, wild Life ! so fraught with change and
pain,

How like a stream that courses on its way
Between the alternate banks of night and
day,
From whence to whither, fleeing thus in vain !

A stream of liquid darkness, save where Love
Breaking the darkness into bits of light,
Glitters a moment for Life's brief delight
Leaning to slake his thirst from heaven above.

REQUIESCAT

A golden moment, ere the moment goes
Turning delight to dumb and dead despair ;
Would we could seize it by the fleeing hair
And hale it back to share our joys, our throes !

Alas, behold the world's fluidity !
The change that clears or clouds the covering
 sky,
Quenches the sun, and dooms each day to die,
Leads back and forth the waters of the sea ;

Crumbles the rocks to sand, and builds again
The mountains, lights or darkens all the stars
And makes man's might, unmakes it, breaks it,
 mars
The order, and makes strife a thing in vain.

PART II

I HEARD a distant voice upon the hills,
A wandering sound of lamentation, where
The nymph Eleutheria hath her lair
Deep hidden by the source of mountain rills.

“ Lo, he is dead, my brother, he who sang
The praise and power of freedom unto man,
Showed God but man, and man a mightier
 than
The gods we serve through fear of Death’s keen
 pang.

REQUIESCAT

“The gods, the changing gods are many, they
Follow their orbits, climb their little path,
And wax and wane beneath their victims’
wrath

Till man who made them lays them each away.

“Oh, brother! oh, my brother, strong wert thou
To smite asunder all the lies of life;
Strong as the sea, incessant in thy strife,
Yet what avails thy might grown strengthless
now?

“E’en as a flame burns upward, so thy mind
Soared toward the Truth, turned as a flower
will turn

To seek the sun, nor seeing didst thou spurn
To show its goodly face to human kind.

REQUIESCAT

“Change, only change in all we know or see,
While truth like water through our fingers
 slips ;

Yet truth was ever, brother, on thy lips
Telling not God’s, but man’s divinity.

“Bring pansies with their velvet for his shroud,
And Spring’s first darling, the anemone,
And gold-eyed daisies, whose simplicity
Mocks at the sun within his station proud.

“Bring violets like drops of purple rain,
And shear the earth of all diurnal flowers,
Pluck up her blossoms, and break down her
 bowers,
Since on her bosom lies our loved one—
 slain.

REQUIESCAT

“Scatter the primrose and that flower of Peace
The white Narcissus, whom pale Proserpine
Plucked, and Death whispered unto young Life
‘ Mine !

No time shall bring thee ransom nor release.’

“Lo, once again the Gatherer, loverwise
‘ Kisses his eyelids down,’ and to his mouth,
Insatiate with love and yearning’s drouth,
Turns, claiming his control — smiles down our
sighs.”

“Yea, Life and Death were rivals for his love !
From the dead ashes leaps the living flame
To light the immortal glory of his fame —
This much hath Life whom Death lords it
above.

REQUIESCAT

“Supernal sleep, what better thing for thee
While deep within the hollow of our hearts
We hide our pain, and, till our life departs,
Burn there the quenchless flame of memory!”

Sleep, dost thou sleep? Perchance Death's
trenchant light

Darkens our eyes and blinds us, lest we see
What was before our birth, and what shall be
When we set sail upon the sea of Night.

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